

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development are described below. This plan ensures an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals for the operation of the state vocational rehabilitation program.

1. Data System

DVR's system to collect personnel information provides annual data concerning the numbers and categories of personnel that are employed by the state agency as well as the projected retirements within five years. The numbers of personnel are then compared to the clients served to determine the projected number of staff needed, including the ratio of counselors to clients. Information on personnel development is described in Section 4 of this attachment.

There are currently 91 individuals employed by North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. During FFY 2013, 4516 individuals were served by vocational rehabilitation. This results in an annual client to counselor ratio of 109 to 1. DVR attempts to hire counseling staff as necessary, based on projected caseload numbers. Current staffing is sufficient to provide vocational rehabilitation services. Hiring additional counseling staff will be dependent upon the need to maintain a reasonable counselor to client ratio and the availability of funding. DVR currently has 7 counselor vacancies. In addition, there is 1 support staff vacancy.

In 2013 North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation's annual turnover rate for counselors was 16.4%, with an overall agency turnover rate of 12.6%. We anticipate the turnover rate will increase in 2014.

During the next five years we estimate 25 staff members will be leaving the agency due to retirement alone. Additional vacancy positions are estimated at 25 counselors in the next five years, in addition to the eight listed above. Traditionally, there is very little turnover in the non-counselor positions.

The table below shows the total number of staff positions, the current vacancies and projected vacancies due to retirement over the next five years:

Vocational Rehabilitation Positions with Current and Projected Vacancies

Job Title	Total Positions	Current Vacancies	Projected Vacancies Over the Next 5 Years
DSU Director	1	0	1
State Office Administrators and Support Staff	10	0	7
Regional Vocational Rehabilitation Administrators	8	0	5
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors	41.5	7	8
Vision Rehabilitation Specialists	7	0	2
Business/Career Assessment Specialists	3	0	0
Human Service Specialists/Aides and Rehabilitation Technician	6	0	4
Supported Employment Coordinator	1	0	1
Regional Support Staff	11	1	3
Drivers (part-time)	1	0	1

2. Personnel Development

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has 30 Counselors and Regional Administrators who meet the Qualified Rehabilitation Professional (QRP), Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) standards. This represents 60.6% of the staff who are required to meet QRP standards. We anticipate 2 additional staff will be eligible to sit for the CRC exam during the fall of 2014. One Vision Rehabilitation Specialist and four Central Office administrators hold CRC certification. All CRC staff must maintain CRC status by participating in the required training. The state DVR office is an approved continuing education provider through CRCC, and the training officer coordinates and notifies staff of various training opportunities throughout the year, including training available at the annual conference. Counselors update their CRC status with their administrator at their annual performance review.

The table below depicts the out-of-state institutions that are providing training to North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation staff who are required to meet Qualified Rehabilitation Professional standards: Regional VR Administrators and VR Counselors. The table also depicts training sites used by North Dakota Vision Rehabilitation Specialists. The numbers enrolled and graduated are for FFY 2013.

Institutions Providing Training to North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation Staff

Institution of Higher Ed	Students Enrolled (10/1/12 – 09/30/13)	Employees Sponsored by Agency and/or RSA	Graduates Sponsored by Agency and/or RSA	Graduates from Previous Year (10/1/12 – 09/30/13)
Utah State University	1	1	0	0
Wisconsin-Stout	0	0	0	0
Virginia Commonwealth University	1	1	0	0
West Virginia University	0	0	0	0
Mississippi State University	0	0	0	0

3. Recruitment and Retention

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation lists all counselor job openings with Job Service North Dakota, specifying a preference for individuals with a Master's Degree in rehabilitation counseling with credentials to qualify for certification. We will also consider the possibility of paid internships as an incentive to attract Master's level interns with the intention of retaining them for counselor openings. We are planning on hiring an intern as a permanent counselor in the near future.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation recruits minorities and individuals from graduate programs in rehabilitation counseling, however, universities in our state do not offer a Master's Degree in rehabilitation counseling. Therefore, we are forced to recruit graduate level counselors from out-of-state. We are often unsuccessful in this effort because in most instances, our salaries are not competitive at the graduate level. If we are successful in recruiting graduate level counselors, we often find it difficult to retain them for the same reason.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation recruits individuals with disabilities and provides reasonable accommodations needed to perform essential job functions. Reasonable accommodations include readers, drivers, and adaptive equipment for current staff with disabilities.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation had requested reclassification of the professional rehabilitation counselor series, to move the counselor positions up a pay grade. This request was submitted to the state's Human Resource Management Services and was reviewed by the committee in June 2013. The reclassification request was denied.

4. Personnel Standards

DVR recognizes that we will be losing valuable experience and managerial knowledge with the high level of retirees who are currently administrators in the regional and central offices. Our *Success in Leadership* initiative (launched in 2007) is a major aspect of our succession planning efforts. Each of the nine members will serve a three year term. We have seen some exciting things happening with this group. Two of the members were promoted to a central office administration position and one to a regional administrator position. Due to entering Order of Selection, Success in Leadership has not met this past year. Applications will be taken this fall and the group of four will start again in January of 2015.

The purpose of *Success in Leadership* is to challenge individuals to become positive forces of change in the field of Vocational Rehabilitation by adopting and implementing exemplary leadership practices. All staff, regardless of their position, are able to apply to become part of *Success in Leadership*. We believe it is important for all staff to be able to expand their knowledge, skills and abilities by participating in quality training on their path to leadership.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has established a policy to ensure that professionals providing Vocational Rehabilitation services are appropriately and adequately trained to meet “Qualified Rehabilitation Professional Standards.” The standard established is that they are nationally Certified Rehabilitation Counselors.

- A.** The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will hire rehabilitation counselors who hold a Master’s Degree in rehabilitation counseling or closely related field from a Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) accredited program and who hold CRC certification or could obtain such certification within 5 years of the date of hire. If unable to recruit individuals who meet these qualifications, DVR will hire the most appropriate and qualified applicant with the expectation that the individual hired will participate in educational programs to meet “Qualified Rehabilitation Professional” standards within 5 years of the date of hire.
- B.** Individuals who do not meet personnel standards will develop a training plan that will identify how they will meet the personnel standards. The plan will also include time lines for meeting the personnel standard which must be approved by their regional administrator and the Central Office Training Coordinator.
- C.** At the present time, individuals requiring retraining to meet the personnel standards enroll in Utah State University’s Distance Education Master’s Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling program, the University of Wisconsin – Stout, West Virginia University, or Virginia Commonwealth University to complete the educational requirement for qualified rehabilitation personnel standards.

We are waiting to hear which universities will be receiving the RSA Long-Term Training/CSPD Scholarships along with the changes there will be in the funding support available. Costs not covered by the scholarships are covered by Vocational Rehabilitation’s 110 funds.

In 1999, North Dakota DVR’s QRP standards were implemented. The goal established at implementation was that 50% of staff on board October 1, 1999, would meet the QRP standards by October 2004 and 100% by October 2009. All staff hired after that date are required to meet QRP standards within 5 years of hire. Currently, 100% of the original staff meet the QRP standards. Staff hired after that date have either met the standard or are in the process of doing so as required.

5. Staff Development

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation conducts an assessment of the training needs of the current staff at all levels - administrative, counselor, and support staff. The needs assessment focuses on two levels of training (1) statewide training topics that are consistent with the State Plan and RSA priorities, and (2) regional training that addresses issues identified through case reviews, performance appraisals and other training that will assist staff in progressing toward their career goals.

In-service training provides for attendance at workshops, conferences, formal course work training in rehabilitation counseling, medical assessment, ethics, job placement, rehabilitation technology, ADA, reauthorization, and other rehabilitation related training. All employees have access to these training opportunities. The agency's continuing education program also allows reimbursement for the cost of tuition and books for classes that are related to job duties and will increase the employee's skills in specific areas.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation receives and distributes information such as rehabilitation journals, Rehabilitation Briefs, National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Research Materials, topics researched by the Institute on Rehabilitation Issues, as well as videos and printed materials on related rehabilitation issues. Information is disseminated through the state email system and hard copies, CDs, DVDs are sent through the mail.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation supports participation in professional organizations by encouraging attendance and providing registration and travel expenses for professional organization meetings and conferences. A number of vocational rehabilitation personnel are active members and hold leadership positions in professional organizations.

6. Addressing Individual Communication Needs

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides interpreter services to individuals who have limited English speaking ability. In several regions where minority populations are more predominant, DVR staff have attended training on the customs and culture of minority groups. These materials are available to all DVR staff.

One of DVR's outreach counselors has a caseload which is made up entirely of minorities. The counselor provides technical assistance to the Vocational Rehabilitation 121 Project located on one of the reservations. This counselor is also a resource for training and consulting on cultural sensitivity and minority issues with DVR staff across the state. This position is currently vacant but is being covered by a veteran counselor in the interim.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides personnel or obtains services to accommodate clients in need of appropriate modes of communication. Agency staff members who have an interest are encouraged to take sign language classes. In regions that do not have personnel trained in alternate modes of communication, this service is purchased.

7. Coordination of the CSPD and In-service Training

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation coordinates CSPD efforts with the CSPD requirements under IDEA. The Department of Public Instruction is represented on the State Rehabilitation Council where information on training conferences is shared and invitations extended to attend each other's conferences and other training activities. DVR is also a member of the statewide Community of Practice that has broad-based representation of agencies involved in various aspects of Transition. Members of the Community of Practice, including one DVR staff, were also part of multi-agency team that participated, for the eighth year in a row, in the Eighth Annual Capacity Building Institute and the IDEA Partnership Conference to identify ways to improve transition services in the state. In addition, ND DVR had one staff on the planning committee for the 2013 North Dakota Secondary Transition and Parent Involvement Conference "Bridges to the Future." DVR staff attended the conference and two staff presented at the conference in April 2013.